



Red
eye

Friday
DECEMBER 26, 2008

redeyechicago.com

A Chicago Tribune publication

★ FREE ★
PHOTO ILLUSTRATION

2008 POP COUPLE OF THE YEAR

The Obamas take RedEye's prize



The almost winners
and the big losers **28-29**



If they don't beat
Houston, Bears
have a problem **12**

Holiday shopping
deals about to get
even better **3**

metromix
Favorite nightlife
moments **19**

2do**To share**

If you don't want to share your relationship issues with friends or family, get advice from strangers and browse other people's woes to share your insights at breakup.com.

To download

If you're looking for dinner ideas and shopping lists you won't forget at home when you head to the store, download an iPod application from foodassistant.com, which includes cooking instructions and 7,000 recipes.

To watch

View classic and obscure films for \$5 or less at theautours.com, and then read more about them or share your thoughts with other movie junkies on key cinema issues like whether "Pulp Fiction" is better than "Reservoir Dogs."

To win

Visit nabiscoworld.com before Jan. 14 and you could win a 52" HDTV, a Blu-ray player and a one year VIP Blockbuster Total Access membership.

Write a song for G-Rod



Last week, while out jogging, Gov. Blagojevich told a Tribune reporter he runs because "it keeps love in your heart."

RedEye saw those words and instantly thought song. So let's make it into one.

Here's our challenge to Chicago's aspiring songwriters: Take the lyric "Keep Love In Your Heart" and create a song using it. It can be the title, or just part of a verse, but it must be included in an original song—any kind of song—about Blagojevich.

Every song will be posted at redeyechicago.com. Our staff will choose finalists and a winner.

This isn't a contest to write new lyrics to an existing song. We want you to create an original song. And the winner will perform the song live on the WGN Midday News. That's live!

The deadline is Jan. 5. Please e-mail complete songs to blagolove@yahoo.com. Send questions to skleinberg@tribune.com.

WHAT'S THE DEAL?**Enter de-tax**

There are three certainties in life: death, taxes—and drunken Google searches for ways to cheat death and taxes. We can't help with death, but now the Internet has given us a legal way to procure a last-minute tax write-off: the charity gift card. Sites such as tisbest.org, charitygiftingcertificates.org and networkforgood.org let you pick a donation total, and the recipient of your card can choose from hundreds of charities to divvy up the dough. Warm fuzzies and tax relief: What a combination!

» Got a deal you want to see in RedEye? E-mail ritaredeye@tribune.com. We're also at twitter.com/redeyechicago



SAT. 53 32	SUN. 36 25
Warm, lots of rain	Back to snow

MON. 45 33	TUE. 42 24
Yes! Some sun!	More sun



47 **47**
TODAY'S FORECAST

Warmer, but foggy and lots of rain.

Look Your Thinnest for the Holidays!

NuU
med spa

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Barack's workout routine

Washington Post

Being elected president forces a man to take inventory of his life, so Barack Obama has trimmed his schedule to the bare essentials.

But one habit endures: Obama has gone to the gym, for about 90 minutes a day, for at least 48 days in a row.

The more Obama's life intensifies, friends said, the more he relies on the gym—which is why he might be taking office in the best shape of his life.

The gym is where he releases stress, maintains a routine and thinks without interruption. He sometimes wears headphones and barricades the outside world.

Once, on July 17, Obama visited a gym three times within 16 hours. Other days—often before primary election nights—he flew in half a dozen friends to play a few hours of pickup basketball.

"That's one of the first things you learn working for him: You better make sure he gets his workout," said Jim Cauley, who managed Obama's 2004 U.S. Senate campaign. "If there isn't any time, he's not going to feel his best that day. If he only gets 30 or 40 minutes, he's still not really happy."

Obama, 47, devotes half of his workout to weight lifting and the other half to a cardiovascular rotation that includes a stationary bicycle, elliptical machine and treadmill.

He favors a post-workout snack of a protein bar and organic iced tea, and he already has disclosed some of his own plans for his new home. He wants to build a full basketball court where he can hold games on the White House grounds.

ALOHA, SANTA

On vacation in Hawaii, Barack Obama and his family planned a Christmas Day that includes opening presents in the morning and sharing a traditional turkey and ham dinner in the evening.

AP



Obama



A man walks past a window of an H&M store Wednesday in San Francisco. AP

RED FRIDAY

MOVE OVER, BLACK FRIDAY: DAY AFTER CHRISTMAS PROMISES HEAVY DISCOUNTS FROM RETAILERS

Chicago Tribune

Christmas is over. But the deals have only just begun.

Burdened with too much inventory and eager to build up cash to endure what is expected to be a rough year ahead, retailers are turning the day after Christmas into another blockbuster bargain day akin to Black Friday.

J.C. Penney is touting its "biggest after-Christmas sale ever," with more than 100 doorbuster offers, twice the number of last year. The department store chain plans to open its doors at 5:30 a.m., marking the earliest start to the day after Christmas in the company's history.

Sears is offering "morning doorbusters" from 7 a.m. to noon, with savings of up to 75 percent off home-electronics clearance items and buy-one, get-one-half-off of all toys. Barnes & Noble is offering 50 percent to 90 percent off thousands of books and calendars at its after-holiday sale. And Neiman Marcus is cutting an extra 40 percent off certain styles of Ugg boots.

The day after Christmas is forecast to be the fourth-biggest shopping day this year, according to ShopperTrak RCT, a Chicago-based market research firm. The top three days so far this year have been Black Friday, last Saturday and Tuesday, the firm said.

"It's very much a buyers' market, and [shoppers] very much respond to the advertising going on," said

TAX HOLIDAY PROPOSED

Earlier this week, the National Retail Federation asked President-elect Obama to suspend state sales taxes for a total of 30 days in 2009 as a way to stimulate consumer spending. Suspending taxes for 30 days would save consumers an average of about \$175 per household, the trade group said. TRIBUNE

Bill Martin, co-founder of ShopperTrak.

The holiday shopping season typically accounts for 20 percent to 30 percent of a retailer's annual revenue. With shoppers worried about their jobs and retirement savings, economists are predicting this holiday shopping season will wind up in the record books as the first to post an industrywide sales decline.

According to one early report, the number of shoppers during the weekend before Christmas declined by double digits this year. Before Christmas had even arrived, the big chains responded to the drop-off by getting a jump on their "after-Christmas" sales.

Consumer traffic at America's retail stores declined 23.7 percent and sales fell 5.3 percent compared with the period a year ago, according to ShopperTrak.

Fewer consumers hit the stores over the weekend, though Saturday sales were better than Sunday, Martin said. On Saturday, sales were up about half a percent, or \$8.75 billion, compared with a year ago.



Twitter Xmas

First we wrote letters, then sent e-mail. Now, we just talk to Santa on Twitter. Here's a look at some Twitter Christmas wishes for the big guy himself. For the gift of RedEye on Twitter, follow us at twitter.com/redeyechicago.

@krisaloma:

A Christmas to remember: Brother is engaged. My wife is pregnant. My dad gave my mom a new car. Thank you @santaclaus. :)

@jtickle:

@santaclaus new plan homie... I want an alternator for a 94 isuzu rodeo v6 for christmas, feel free to take back all my other gifts

@dylanorion:

@santaclaus you hear me? I want a red rider bb gun with a compass in the stock!

@bigjonevans:

@SantaClaus Thank you for everything!! How did you know I needed more socks and underwear in my stocking??

@RLFosse:

@SantaClaus Help yourself to what is in the fridge. Leftover chinese and some really good coffee! Love you!

@jjtoothman:

@santaclaus do u prefer fat free or whole milk with your cookies?



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'Twas the day after Christmas and you screwed up

Are you experiencing one or more of these symptoms?

A warm sensation in your spine. Excessive facial reddening. Uncontrollable stammering.

Don't panic. You're just suffering from Gift Deficiency Syndrome (GDS), a common ailment throughout the holiday season, particularly the day after Christmas. GDS hits when a family member or friend presents you with a gift and you have "nada" to give in return.

Don't act like you've never been shamed into searching a closet for a gift you never bought, or coming up with cockamamie stories about leaving gifts in your car ... which was, um, towed the night before.

Seasonal space-outs happen to us all, though we all have different ways of dealing. Some don't deal, apparently in tune with the advice of etiquette expert Lizzie Post, who earlier this month told Motley Fool there is no need for "leveling out the playing field" when it comes to a gift exchange.

No offense to Post, but I say pish posh. GDS can easily be cured and should be, given that you may have crushed a crush or disappointed a friend or relative. Take your pick of the following treatment options — ranging in levels of redemption — and let your economic situation, your closeness to the thwarted gifter and your need to set things right be your guide.

Sneak attack

Redemption level: Low. Best applied to an acquaintance or really cool co-worker.

No, you weren't expecting that cute gift, but that's no excuse. If you don't have anything handy to give them, invite them to a decent lunch and get the tab. Otherwise, grab a gift card for them from their favorite coffee shop. It's a small price to pay to spread some holiday cheer.

Shake and bake

Redemption level: Medium. Best applied to a good friend, family friend or new love interest.

Get out your apron, throw on a chef's hat and bake your way out of your seasonal slip-up. Do not use that pre-packaged cookie dough in the refrigerated area of your local Jewel. Instead, whip up some tasty treats from scratch and place them in a nice basket, atop holiday napkins if possible. If you absolutely cannot decipher cookbook directions, pick up the pastries from a reputable bakery. Just make sure to remove the plastic before you present.

Outgift them

Redemption level: High. Best applied to a significant other or their parents.

Up the ante — big time — on the gift you received. Don't go so far as answering a leather wallet with a Wii, but your gift needs to be super-thoughtful to mitigate GDS-induced delay. The notion is to stun the recipient into forgetting your forgetfulness. Then, while they're shrieking with delight, make a mental note to be GDS-free next year.



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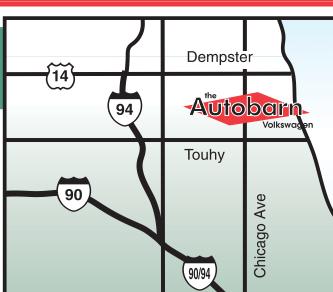
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chicago

O'HOLY POTHOLE!

**With 300 complaints per day,
the city's annual bumpy ride has arrived**

Chicago Tribune

Chicago motorists may feel they're swerving more than usual to avoid those potholes that can resemble small craters, but guess what? The worst is yet to come.

Late December is typically the start of pothole season, as its rapid temperature fluctuations ("freeze-and-thaw cycles" is the term of art) wreak havoc on pavement.

Take this week: We started out with subzero temperatures, which rose to the mid-30s Wednesday. Temperatures dipped below freezing again Thursday and are expected to be followed by a rapid warm-up that could push us into the 40s Friday. Sounds like a recipe for potholes.

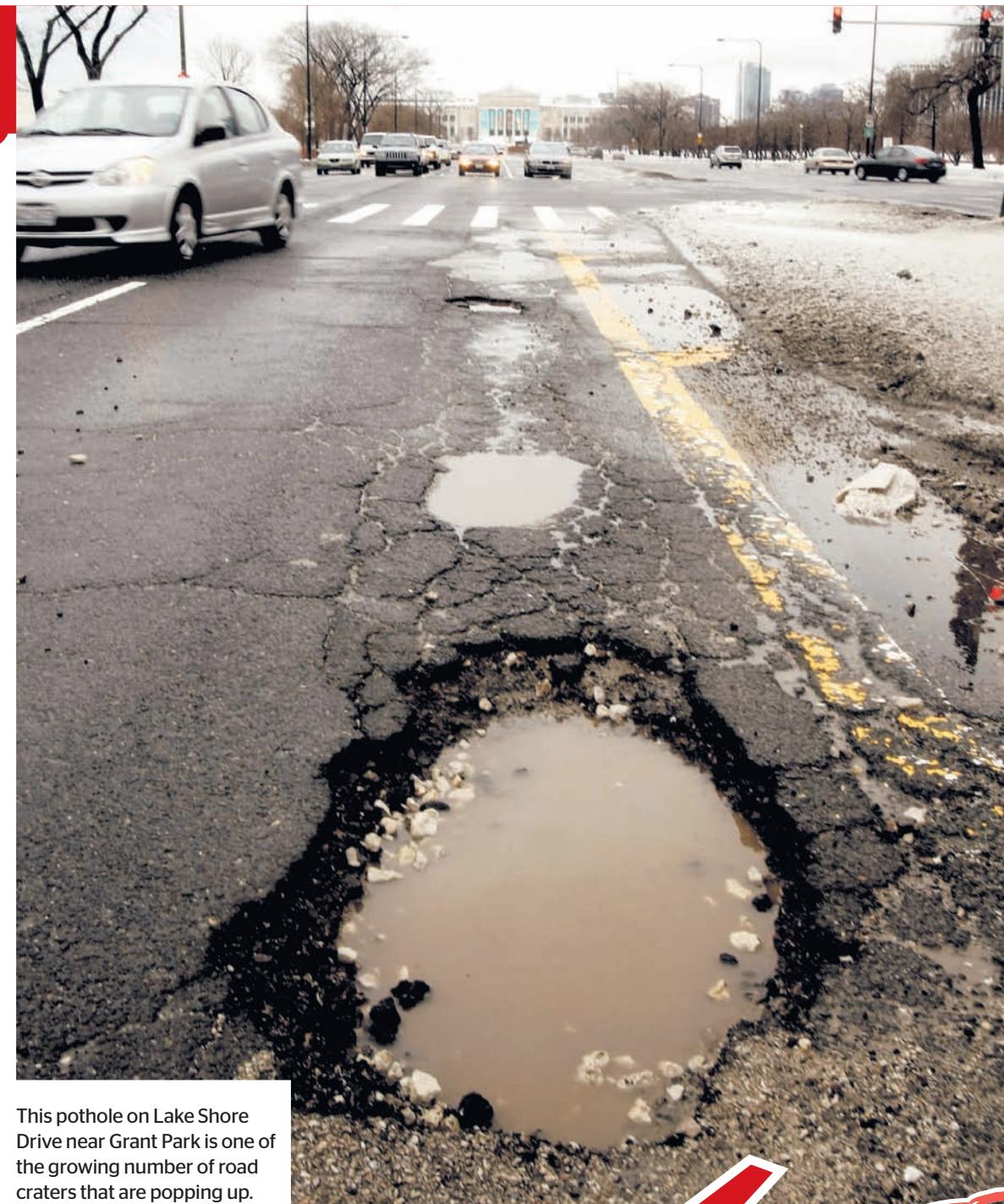
So far, according to city statistics, December has been, if not quite smooth sailing, then at least no bumpier than usual. As of Tuesday, pothole complaints were holding steady—about 300 pothole calls per day through the city's 311 line.

Maybe a recently resurfaced Lake Shore Drive, infamous for potholes that could jar bus passengers out of their seats, gets part of the credit. But Brian Steele, a Chicago Department of Transportation spokesman called those complaints a "very small number" considering the 3,800 miles of streets that city pothole crews monitor.

Of course, Steele acknowledged, "It's possible we'll see the numbers go up."

For his part, Streets and Sanitation Commissioner Michael Picardi expressed relief that the topic of his news conference on Wednesday was snow removal and not potholes.

"Not my responsibility—thank God!" Picardi joked.



This pothole on Lake Shore Drive near Grant Park is one of the growing number of road craters that are popping up.

PHIL VELASQUEZ/TRIBUNE

Season's greetings—stranded at O'Hare

Associated Press

Christmas Day was the second morning Tom and Kristina Waltz and their two daughters awoke at O'Hare, after days of flight delays and cancellations that marred their holiday travel plans.

The family from Vancouver, Wash., tried to fly out of Portland, Ore., on Sunday, but a blast of snow and ice prevented them from catching a flight for two days. They finally reached Chicago, but then were stuck spending two nights at a hotel inside O'Hare, unlike others who had to sleep on floors and cots in the terminal. They were eager for their Thursday

evening flight to Miami, where they planned to board a Caribbean cruise on Saturday.

"We are checked in" for the flight, Kristina Waltz, a teacher, said Thursday morning. "We'll go into the airport, have some lunch and play cards some more."

The Waltzes were not alone. On Wednesday, more than 100 flights were canceled at O'Hare, the nation's second busiest airport, as airports across the country recovered from winter storms.

Elsewhere, deep snow was still causing travel problems on Christmas Day in the West, where the National Weather Service

posted winter storm warnings and advisories for large sections.

Nearly a dozen flights were canceled Thursday at O'Hare, but no delays were reported. Midway had no delays or cancellations, according to the aviation department.

One American Airlines plane left a gate at O'Hare but hit an icy patch while turning onto a runway and slid sideways into the grass. There were no injuries, but the 54 passengers had to be put on other Christmas Eve flights.

Though cancellations dropped off from more than 500 a day earlier and



delays were shortened to about 30 minutes, airlines at O'Hare still requested 75 cots for passengers Wednesday night, said Greg Cunningham, a Chicago aviation department spokesman. Some people slept on the floor.

The temperature outside the terminal fell to zero, with a windchill of 9 below, the National Weather Service said.

Meat plant blaze

Firefighters battled a 3-alarm fire Thursday at a fat reprocessing plant on the South Side. There were no injuries, but the one-story brick structure's roof collapsed. The blaze started about 11:45 a.m. at the structure at West 38th Street and South Morgan Avenue. While the fire was contained to the structure, a hazardous materials team was called because officials were worried about chemicals in the building, said Jose Santiago, assistant deputy fire commissioner of operations.

CN rail deal approved

Canadian National Railway has won federal approval for its controversial purchase of a line that would loop freight trains around Chicago, a bypass that some suburban communities fear will cause massive traffic problems. Proposed 15 months ago, CN and its supporters say the deal will create hundreds of jobs and ease train gridlock. Supporters say the project would shift freight traffic away from the city by looping it through the outer suburbs.

CTA driver grazed by bullet

A CTA bus driver was grazed by a bullet Thursday on the South Side, police said. Two people on the street were involved in an altercation at West 66th Street and South Western Avenue and one opened fire, striking the driver. CTA spokeswoman Wanda Taylor said the driver suffered a "minor graze wound" to the leg when a bullet struck the door of the bus. No one else was injured.

Man shot on West Side

A 25-year-old West Side man was hospitalized in critical condition early Thursday morning with gunshot wounds to both his legs. The man, who wasn't identified, was taken to Mt. Sinai Hospital after being shot in his home in the 4000 block of Jackson Boulevard. Police said the man knew his assailant, who fled after the shooting about 3:30 a.m. They believe the attack may be a domestic incident.



The former home of Al Capone (seen here in 1930) is expected to go on sale in the spring and is expected to sell near \$450,000. Authorities shown here not included. **TRIBUNE FILE**

Capone's house to hit the market

Want to own a notorious piece of Chicago history?

The modest, red-brick home once owned by Al Capone is expected to hit the market this spring for an estimated \$450,000, marking a new chapter for the infamous South Side landmark that has had just two owners since the death of Capone's mother in 1952.

"I think there's some value in the home's history," said Barbara Hogsette, 71, who has lived in the house since 1963 but plans to relocate to California next year to be closer to her son. "But I don't think that history means the same thing to everyone who might be interested in buying it."

For more than a century, the two-flat home with large bay windows has stood near the corner of 72nd Street and South Prairie Avenue in Park Manor. Cook County records show the Capones bought the home for \$5,500 in August 1923.

Al Capone was in his early 20s when his family moved from Brooklyn to Chicago, but he already was building his legend. His bootlegging, gambling and prostitution enterprises were famously headquartered in Cicero and later moved to a suite in the old Lexington Hotel at Cermak Road and Michigan Avenue.

Police kept a close eye on Capone. In a story that appeared in the Tribune in December 1927, Capone was described as being held captive in the home by police who intended to arrest the mob boss if he stepped outside.

Capone later left the home without being arrested, and it would be four more turbulent years in Chicago before he was indicted on tax evasion charges and was taken off the streets for good. Capone died in 1947, but his mother remained in the home until her death five years later, at which point the property was taken over by a local bank.

Coping with feral cats

On a given night in Pilsen, Valerie Chalcraft can be spotted hanging out in a dark alley.

So can Kim Carlson, Yvette Pià and a handful of others.

Only the stray cats in the Southwest Side neighborhood know why.

Whenever the women show up, the cats emerge from abandoned buildings or beneath cars with hungry eyes. The encounter usually means a bite of fish and, sometimes, a home.

For the humans, it's another step toward solving the seemingly intractable problem of feral cats in Chicago.

"We've put them in this situation," said Chalcraft, an animal behaviorist who is part of a small but committed army of volunteers tending to the strays. "We've domesticated them and then just let them loose."

With cage traps ready, the "caregivers" catch strays and take them to be spayed or neutered, vaccinated and treated for disease.

400K

That how many of such animals are estimated to be in Chicago. Advocates warn that number is rising as the economy pushes some pet owners to abandon their animals.

Festivus for the rest of us!

The debate over religious displays in the Illinois Capitol's rotunda took a farcical turn this week when a boarding school student put up an aluminum pole to honor Festivus.

For those in the dark, Festivus is a mock holiday popularized by a 1997 episode of "Seinfeld." The pole is a Christmas tree-like symbol, and semi-ironic celebrations of Festivus, usually observed on Dec. 23, include such traditions as the "Airing of Grievances" and the "Feats of Strength."

Michael Tennenhouse, 18, said he was home in Springfield on winter break, taking in impeachment hearings at the Capitol, when he came across a nativity scene, a menorah and an atheist group's display in the rotunda. The exhibits have stirred up controversies, all of which struck Tennenhouse as silly.

So when Tennenhouse filled out an application to put up the Festivus pole ("the lady burst out laughing"), it was approved the same day.

Tennenhouse found a blue aluminum pole (Festivus poles are to be "unadorned") that was part of a pool skimmer and stuck it in a Christmas tree holder.

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Guinea coup**1** Guinea's coup leader, Capt.

Moussa Camara, solidified his hold over this impoverished West African nation Thursday as the prime minister who served under the late dictator surrendered and stepped down along with dozens of other government leaders.



Camara

Nightclub tragedy**2** Police in Juliaca, Peru, say five people

are dead after a tear gas grenade was detonated Thursday in a crowded disco.

65 poisoned**3** Sixty-five students in Hohhot, China,

were poisoned by carbon monoxide after smoke from a dormitory boiler seeped into their rooms, state media reported Thursday.

Deadly Santa rampage**4** A 45-year-old man in a Santa Claus

outfit showed up at a party in Covina, Calif., and opened fire at a group of revelers, killing at least five people and injuring several others, including two children, authorities said Thursday. The suspect later killed himself.

Suspect dies**5** A former Utah state trooper suspected in

a series of Dallas-area roadway shootings died on Christmas Eve, a day after police said he turned a gun on himself after a standoff.

Watch where you spit**6** A trail of tobacco spit has led investigators

to a suspect in at least five burglaries across eastern Oklahoma, said police in Tahlequah, Okla. Randy Lee Shoopman Jr., 33, was charged after a sample of his DNA matched that taken from expectorant left behind at the scene of several burglaries.

Terror threat

The terrorism threat to the U.S. over the next five years will be driven by instability in the Middle East and Africa, challenges to border security and increasing Internet savvy, says a new assessment obtained by The Associated Press.



DIY DNA

Genetic engineering growing among the garageologists set

The Apple computer was invented in a garage. Same with the Google search engine. Now, tinkerers are working at home with the basic building blocks of life itself.

Using homemade lab equipment and the wealth of scientific knowledge available online, these hobbyists are trying to create new life forms through genetic engineering—a field long dominated by PhDs toiling in university and corporate laboratories.

In her San Francisco dining room lab,

for example, 31-year-old computer programmer Meredith Patterson is trying to develop genetically altered yogurt bacteria that will glow green to signal the presence of melamine, the chemical that turned Chinese-made baby formula and pet food deadly.

"People can really work on projects for the good of humanity while learning about something they want to learn about in the process," she said.

So far, no major gene-splicing discoveries have come out a kitchen or garage.

But critics of the movement worry that these amateurs could one day unleash an environmental or medical disaster. Defenders say the future Bill Gates of biotech could be developing a cure for cancer in the garage.

Many of these amateurs may have studied biology in college but have no advanced degrees and are not earning a living in the biotechnology field. Some proudly call themselves "biohackers"—innovators who push technological boundaries and put the spread of knowledge before profits.



Christmas in Iraq

7

BAGHDAD U.S. Army Capt. A.J. Boyes (left) hands a Christmas present Thursday to Sgt. Mark Peck at combat outpost Ford in the Shiite stronghold of Sadr City. For the first time, the Iraqi government declared Christmas an official holiday. AP PHOTO

QUOTES OF THE DAY

"Let us pray for mutual understanding, that hearts will be opened, so that borders can be opened."

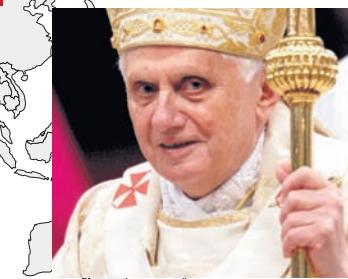
POPE BENEDICT XVI

at Christmas midnight mass, on his hopes for the Holy Land

"It's, at best, embarrassing. At worst, it's an extraordinary example of this White House's ability to bollox up one bit of presidential authority that he clearly has."

DOUG BERMAN

a law professor at Ohio State University, on President Bush's revoking of a pardon



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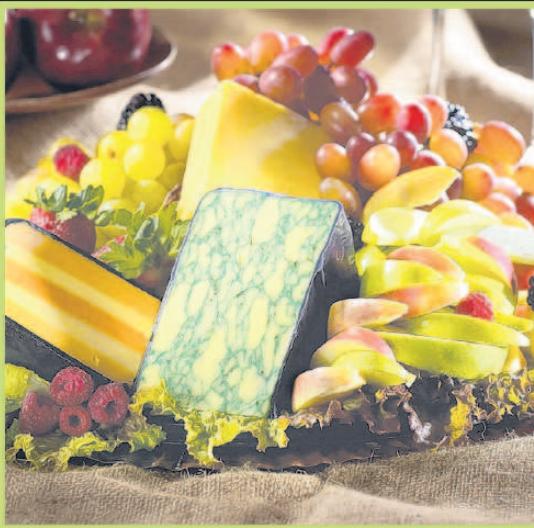
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sports

Will Giants give Vikings free pass to playoffs?

MINNESOTA VS. NEW YORK GIANTS

Noon Sunday

The Giants clinched home-field advantage throughout the playoffs with last week's victory over Carolina.

MCT

Anyone who is around the Minnesota Vikings and is trying to dial down the pressure this week had best avoid Jared Allen.

The Pro Bowl defensive end is so excited for the Vikings' regular-season finale against the New York Giants that he accidentally knocked defensive coordinator Leslie Frazier to the ground during a 1-on-1 drill Wednesday—about 96 hours before kickoff.

"It's more than another game," Allen said. "You're crazy if you don't think that. There's going to be a lot of emotion in this game, at least for me. You have a chance to win your division and go to the playoffs, what more do you want?"

Last year, the Vikings also had an opportunity to lock up a playoff berth with a home victory, but instead Washington cruised to a 32-21 victory in the second-to-last game of the season. There will be a few unknowns entering this game.

Out of the Vikings' control is how the Giants will approach this game. New York has clinched the top seed in the NFC and thus has a first-round bye and home-field advantage in the playoffs sewn up. This puts Giants coach Tom Coughlin in a position to rest his starters, including quarterback Eli Manning, if he chooses.

Coughlin also could choose to rest running back Brandon Jacobs and star defensive lineman Justin Tuck, both of whom are dealing with injuries.

WIN OR GO HOME

BEARS PLAYOFF HOPES DANGLE BY A THREAD; MUST BEAT TEXANS

From news services

For all the playoff scenarios Bears fans have been pondering this week, only one thing matters.

Beating Houston on Sunday.

Lose to the Texans and the Bears can throw every playoff scenario in the book out the window.

"It's hard to think this can be it for us," said defensive end Adewale Ogunleye. "We put ourselves in this situation, but I have the faith that everything will pan out if we finish 10-6."

Kyle Orton probably won't have much time to check out the scoreboard to see how Chicago's playoff hopes are panning out. He has thrown eight interceptions in the last four games after a streak of 205 straight passes without one.

"It's tough to do in football," he said. "You've got so many adjustments, especially the quarterback. For me, you've got so much going on. I'm sure I'll sneak a peek up there at some point, but for the most part, you're just concerned about making the necessary adjustments from series to series."

Coach Lovie Smith agreed with his quar-

terback, noting that he, too, will be too busy to worry about what is going on outside of Reliant Stadium.

"You start looking at that offense and the weapons they have, look at some of their defensive personnel, that'll keep you occupied," he said.

The Texans have long been out of playoff contention and are looking to atone for last week's embarrassing loss at Oakland that snapped a franchise-best four-game win-

ning streak.

Most players insist that the chance to knock the Bears out of the playoffs isn't any added motivation, and cornerback Dunta Robinson did the same before admitting the obvious.

"We're going to go out and play hard. Any time you end the season on a loss, that's a long offseason," Robinson said. "At least with a win, you have something to look forward to for next season."



The Bears aren't thinking of this game as the regular-season finale and realize it can be dangerous to play a team this time of year with nothing to lose.

"You have to look at it as a playoff game," Chicago's Rashied Davis said. "It is a playoff game for us. Win or go home, so how else do you look at it? For them, it's an opportunity to keep us from going to the playoffs and also get to 8-8. For that franchise, I suspect that's a big deal to be at 8-8."

The Bears need their secondary intact Sunday against Texans Pro Bowl receiver Andre Johnson.

WHAT'S THE SCENARIO?

The NFC North division title—and a berth in the playoffs—is going to go down to the final day of the regular season.

If Minnesota beats New York, the division is theirs. However, if the Bears win at Houston and the Vikings lose, Chicago wins the North and Minnesota is out. If the Bears and Vikings both win or lose, the Vikings are champions based on tiebreakers.

The Bears also could clinch a playoff spot with a win and losses by Dallas (at Philadelphia) and Tampa Bay (vs. Oakland).

And it appears it will be.

Cornerback Charles Tillman and safety Mike Brown are expected to play. Both sat out Wednesday's practice, with Tillman resting his sore right ankle and Brown nursing a calf injury.

"Mike Brown, he's been down," Smith said. "But in the end, it seems like he always plays. Charles will be fine. There's nothing seriously wrong with him. He should be good to go, hopefully."

Johnson leads the league with 1,427 receiving yards and is second with 105 receptions.

Meanwhile, another member of the Bears secondary is making a strong case to be considered the team's MVP.

Do-everything safety and kick returner Danieal Manning turned the tide in the team's win against Jacksonville with an early interception. In last week's game against Green Bay, Manning had more yards on returns (117) than any running back or wide receiver in the game. The Bears, of course, won in overtime.

Here's a look at Manning's impact by the numbers:

29.4: Manning's average on 30 kickoff returns, tops in the NFL

32: The yard line representing the Bears' average starting field position, second-best in the league

7: Number of kickoffs Manning has returned for 40 or more yards, second-highest in the league

5: Number of positions on defense and special teams Manning has played: nickel back, safety, cornerback, personal protector on punts and kickoff returner

10.34 seconds: Manning's fastest recorded speed in the 100 meters at Corsicana (Texas) High School, the fourth-best in the nation that year

AP, TRIBUNE CONTRIBUTED.

Returning gifts from our teams

Today, as you know, is the perfect day to return all the gifts you didn't want.

Well, the same goes for me. I've got a pile of things that need to go back. Let's get started.

First off, we have the general inability of the Cubs to play remotely like a champion over the past 100 years. Poor scouting, mismanaged money, players with poor fundamentals—botching the hit-and-run, not knowing when to take a walk, playing poor defense, general ineptitude. I am returning all of these right now. I do have a gift receipt but I'm told it's worthless.

I have a gift here from the Blackhawks called "Tradition." As in, you've been selling me tradition for years—time to produce. Well, they have, so I won't be needing tradition anymore. Those wins aside, please win the New Year's Day game. Everyone's watching, and, you know ... Detroit.

This gift from the Bulls also needs to go back. It's called "The Future." You've been selling me this for so long since the title years, really, I have all I need. Get some players for Derrick Rose and let's get on with it.

From the White Sox, I'm returning their "grinder ball" marketing campaign. "Grinder ball" is another way of saying, "We're too cheap to go after the real difference-makers, so we'll get these guys." Fair enough. You get what you get, but I want another title. It's been three years, and I'm getting cranky.

I also have here a do-it-yourself defibrillator, given to me to watch Bears games with. I appreciate the gesture, but I've made a decision. If the Bears play one more overtime thriller and I do go into cardiac arrest, I'm asking, please, to let me go to the other side. No bad sports teams over there. It seems easier. Take my organs and do what you will—I don't think anyone would want them.

So, after I return all of these gifts for no cash value, it's time to settle in for one last Bears game.

One, no one had them at 10-6 and possibly winning the division. Two, I don't care. Let's win this thing. Three, the Vikings are never that good, even when they're good. Four, I have always loved the New York Giants. Five, Kyle Orton: It's not love anymore; you've been downgraded to "tolerable." I would tolerate another win, however. Make it happen.

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Good Friday

Loyal Facebooker Shakenya Jackson joins us post-holiday. Facebook: truly the gift that keeps on giving.



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1 How sure are you that the Bears will make the playoffs?	Not so sure. I heard Houston's starting Chuck Norris at flanker.	I bet my bippy on it.	No chance. Then again, I borrowed my game calculator from That Guy.	About as sure as I am of my stamina.	As sure as I am that my car will be lodged in snow once Daley's Finest plow the street.
2 Help Chicago out and propose a way to sabotage Minnesota on Sunday.	Convince them to start Tarvaris Jackson at—ohhhh, I'm sorry. Awkward.	They're chokers, so just make sure they take the field on time.	Al Franken wins a Senate seat, and Minnesotans won't ever be the ones laughing.	Dynamite their locker room, or, equally as good, gift them Grossman.	Slip them some "Grossman stew" (found at inconsistent, inconvenient stores near you).
3 It's the day after Christmas. What are you returning this year?	Thanks to "Momma's Boys," my dignity.	All the eggnog I drank on Christmas.	The favor. Thanks, Jo Noah.	I'm exchanging my self-respect for some lucky lady's.	Surely not this yellow, pleather purse with a light next to the mirror inside. Might be handy.
4 How do the New York Yankees have \$400 million to spend on free agents?	Jason Giambi's lucrative side job posing as Ron Burgundy at parties.	Screw the Yankees. They were born on third base and think they hit a triple.	Please let it be microbial agents for all the Yankee hands that rock the cradle.	Blago works the ticket booth.	They own the contract on the new "Who's stupid-enough-to-pay-that?" parking meters.
5 Got any good holiday party stories to share?	Fearing it didn't have enough bourbon in it, Jimmy peed in the punch.	I caught Dwight and Angela doing it in the supply closet.	It involves a tuxedo T-shirt. I like to party, so I like my Jesus to party.	Rockit's Rockmitzvah: Don't recall what she looked like, but her last name ended in "schitz."	Yes: I didn't attend any. Are you jealous, resentful and bitter? That's the holiday spirit!

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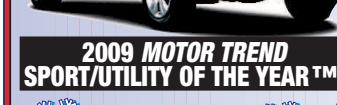


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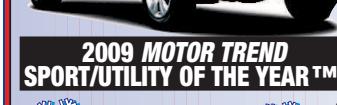
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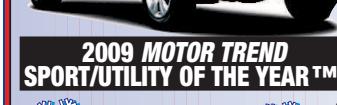
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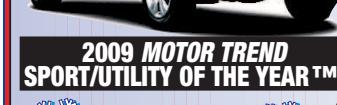
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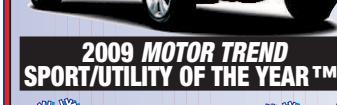
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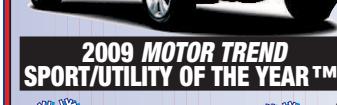
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MSRP: \$19,533.00, Auto, Red #4164 MSRP: \$22,152.00, Auto, Black or Silver #4587/88
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MSRP: \$19,898.00, Automatic, 5-Door, Blue #4437 MSRP: \$25,33.00, Red, #3741
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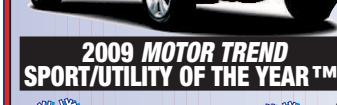
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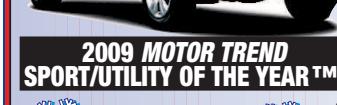
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LAKERS 92, CELTICS 83

Kobe's revenge

L.A. Laker Kobe Bryant splits Boston defenders while driving to the basket during Thursday's victory over the Celtics.

L.A. TIMES



Perhaps now the L.A. Lakers can put the anguish of losing the NBA finals to Boston and the embarrassment over the way it ended behind them.

Kobe Bryant had 27 points, nine rebounds and five assists, Pau Gasol scored seven of his 20 points in the final three minutes, and the Lakers beat Boston 92-83 Thursday to snap the Celtics' franchise-record 19-game winning streak.

The game was the first between the teams since the Celtics romped to a 131-92 victory in Game 6 of the finals last June to win their first championship in 22 years.

"We've been waiting for that opportunity for a long time, and we won," said Lakers guard Sasha

OTHER GAMES THURSDAY

- San Antonio 91, Phoenix 90
- Orlando 88, New Orleans 68

Vujacic, who scored 10 points. "I don't like them at all. A lot of people called us softies or whatever. It doesn't matter at all. We know what we can do."

"Last year, they won the championship. This year, it's our year, we want to take it all the way."

The victory was the 1,000th for former Bulls coach Phil Jackson, enabling him to become the sixth NBA coach to reach that milestone. He became the fastest to win 1,000 games, just edging former Lakers coach Pat Riley.

Gasol's three-point play with 1:28 left put the Lakers on top 88-83. Gasol then blocked a 3-pointer by Ray Allen, setting up Trevor Ariza for a dunk that gave L.A. a seven-point lead.



watch dog

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My dear friends: On Sunday, we make our final stand.

Our cause: The Bears. Our foe: The Texans. Our battlefield: My tastefully appointed living room. Hands off those martini glasses—they're custom-made.

With the holidays petering out, it's time to rededicate ourselves to our beloved-if-shaky team. So let's put our heads together, our hearts together, our ugly sweaters together, and will the Bears to win.

And will the Vikings to lose. Punks.

Here now, my TV picks.

CHAMPS



SPORTS BOWL WISCONSIN VS. FLORIDA STATE

3:30 p.m.
Saturday, ESPN
Live from Orlando,
home of Disney
World—perfect for
those goofy Badgers.



BEARS AT HOUSTON

Noon Sunday, Fox

HOMETOWN HITS



Notre Dame can finally enjoy a football offseason. The nine-game losing streak is over. Jimmy Clausen (5 TDs) led the Irish to a 49-21 victory over Hawaii on Wednesday night in the Hawaii Bowl. Now coach Charlie Weis can focus on replacing offensive coordinator Michael Haywood, who left for Miami of Ohio—and on his knees. He's set to have his right knee replaced next Monday. He'll have major surgery on his left knee in February.

at Miami

BULLS
Friday 4 p.m., CSN, ESPN
The Bulls begin a three-game road trip Friday in Miami. They'll look to improve on a 3-13 record away from the United Center. "We're not real efficient to start the game," coach Vinny Del Negro said. "We dig ourselves big holes."

vs. Philadelphia

HAWKS
Friday 7:30 p.m., CSN
The Hawks play Philadelphia on Friday night at the United Center and will attempt to tie a franchise record with their eighth straight victory. NBC will air the next home game, the Winter Classic, Jan. 1 from Wrigley Field.

INDEPENDENCE BOWL vs. Louisiana Tech

HUSKIES
Sunday 7 p.m., ESPN
It isn't enough, apparently, that Northern Illinois has to play a Louisiana team in its home state Sunday night in the Independence Bowl in Shreveport. They have the whole Bayou State against them after Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal declared last Friday Louisiana Tech Football Day across the state. Still, the Huskies are one of this season's best turnaround stories, going 6-6 after a 2-10 mark in 2007.

Wade's big gift

When Chicago native Dwyane Wade heard the plight of a South Florida woman whose nephew had accidentally burned down her home, the Miami Heat star knew he had to do something. Wade presented Dawn Smith with the ultimate Christmas gift Wednesday—the keys to a new house, along with furnishings, clothing and gifts to make sure her family has a joyous holiday.

Dunk you very much

Orlando Magic center Dwight Howard will try to defend his Slam Dunk championship at the NBA All-Star weekend in Phoenix in February. He'll face off against Memphis' Rudy Gay and 2006 winner Nate Robinson of New York. A fan vote will determine the fourth competitor.

MOTOR CITY BOWL

FLORIDA ATLANTIC (6-6) AT CENTRAL MICHIGAN (8-4)

7:30 p.m., ESPN
Florida Atlantic is seeking a second-straight bowl victory. Central Michigan has made three straight Motor City Bowls.

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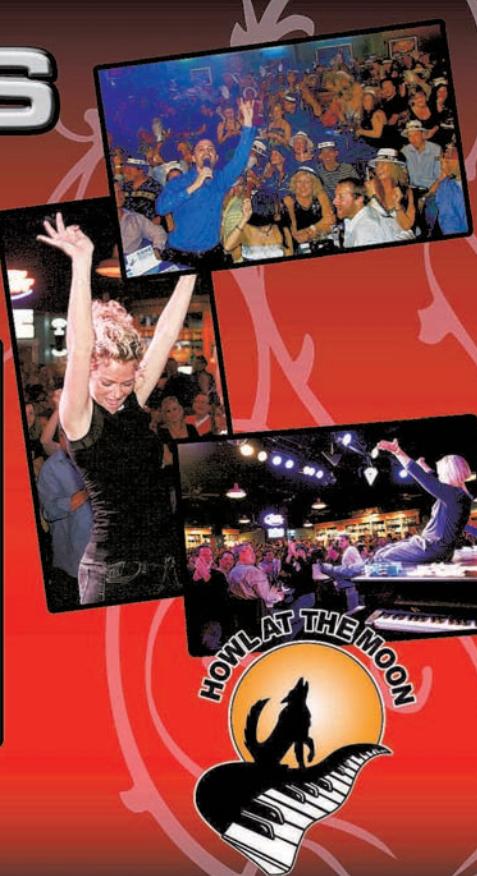
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ALL BOMBS \$5

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NIGHTCRAWLERS

Hall of Fame 2008

Our favorite nightlife moments caught on camera

Nearly every weekend of the year, our faithful photographers canvass bars to catch you in action. Sometimes you were naughty and sometimes you were nice—nevertheless, check out our favorites from 2008.



These two knew how to party Vegas-style at River North club **Religion**.



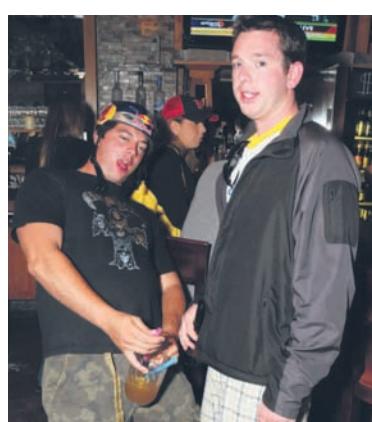
A shortage of seats, maybe? A couple cozies up on the patio at Logan Square bar **The Whistler**.



It took three to sip a martini at high-rise lounge **Vertigo**.



Baseball fans rooted for their home teams during the Crosstown Classic at **Mitchell's Tap** (above) and the playoffs at **Buffalo Wings & Rings** (right).



If you think you might hurt yourself while drinking, then do as this dude did at **The Coach House** and wear a helmet.



Thinking pink after the Pride Parade at **Halsted's** in Boystown.



Things got scary on the **Zombie Pub Crawl** in Andersonville.



Partying with Obama at our Rock the Vote bash at **House of Blues**.



This year's **Twelve Bars of Christmas Pub Crawl** (a.k.a. TBOX) drew an estimated 6,700 bargoers for a jolly good time in Wrigleyville.



Turkey leg love at **Lotties** during our Black Wednesday Pilgrimage.

BROWNSTONE TAVERN & GRILL
\$5 drink specials; 3937 N. Lincoln Ave. 773-528-3700.

CASEY MORAN'S
\$1 burgers, \$3 Heineken bottles, \$5 Red Bull vodkas, \$5 bomb shots; 3660 N. Clark St. 773-755-4444.

THE CENTRAL
\$5 martinis, \$5 Bacardi bombs, \$5 appetizers; 3466 N. Clark St. 773-880-2222.

CLUB ROYALE
6 p.m.: Cocktails and Connections. DJs Markfullaflava and I.N.C. spin. Cover varies; 205 N. Peoria St. 312-666-9400.

EMPIRE LIQUORS
DJ Hiroki spins house, hip-hop and rock 9 p.m.; 1566 N. Milwaukee Ave. 773-278-1600.

EVIL OLIVE
DJs Zebo and Koncept spin. No cover; 1551 W. Division St. 773-235-9100.

EXIT
\$3 PBR drafts, DJs Rodney and Andrew spin punk and metal; 1315 W. North Ave. 773-395-2700.

FIZZ BAR & GRILL
8 p.m.: Do-It-Yourself Holiday Party. No office party this year? Fizz takes matters into its own hands with its celebration of the season. Party on the cheap with complimentary Christmas cookies, half-price appetizers and \$3 cocktails. DJs spin. No cover; 3220 N. Lincoln Ave. 773-348-6088.

THE GLOBE PUB
\$3 well drinks, \$4 Tetley's drafts, \$7-\$9.50 fish and chips, DJ Mike Z spins '80s 9 p.m.-1 a.m.; 1934 W. Irving Park Rd. 773-871-3757.

HIDEOUT
\$2 PBR and Old Style cans, \$2.50 Berghoff bottles; 1354 W. Wabansia Ave. 773-227-4433.

Metromix's top club picks



OHM

10 p.m.: DJs Speed, 33 1/3, Eddie 2 Raw, Omar Perez, Scream, Nando and Cesar Perez spin mash-ups, hip-hop, house and more, 10 p.m. \$20. No cover before midnight with RSVP: ultra@oneworldchicago.com; 1958 W. North Ave. (entrance at rear/alley). 773-278-4646.

HOGS & HONEYS

\$1 domestic drafts; 901 W. Weed St. 312-804-1459.

INNJOY

\$9.95 all-you-can-eat fish fry (5-10 p.m.), \$4 Heineken, Heineken Light and Amstel Light bottles, \$6

jager bombs

2051 W. Division St. 773-394-2066.

J BAR

\$6 p.i.n.k. vodka cocktails, DJ Con spins 10 p.m.; RSVP to andy@jameshotels.com; 610 N. Rush St. 312-660-7200.

LAKEVIEW BROADCASTING CO.

Half-price food until 8 p.m., \$3 kamikaze shots, \$5 Level cocktails; 3542 N. Halsted St. 773-857-2444.

LEG ROOM

\$4 Stoli drinks, \$5

FUNKY BUDDHA LOUNGE

9 p.m.: Bhangraheque, the Final Chapter of 2008. DJs Jimmy Singh and Tony Talwar spin bhangra and Asian beats. Drink specials include \$6 mango and chai martinis and \$6 white Russians. \$10; 728 W. Grand Ave. 312-922-1007.

VAIN NIGHTCLUB & LOUNGE

10 p.m.: Zoo Fridays. DJs Bear Who?, Trilogy, NewLife and Blakish spin hip-hop, house, R&B and dancehall. \$10; 2354 N. Clybourn Ave. 773-435-0130.

Snow Queen vodka

drinks, \$6 Jager bombs, \$50 discount on champagne and liquor bottles, DJ Mach 1 spins. \$5-\$10; 7 W. Division St. 312-337-2583.

THE MOTEL BAR

\$5 Absolut cocktails,

\$8 blackened tilapia sandwiches, DJ Scott Lucas of Local H spins rock and alternative 10 p.m.-2 a.m.; 600 W. Chicago Ave. 312-822-2900.

OLE LOUNGE

Half-price select tapas (5-7 p.m.), \$4 caipirinhas, live Brazilian music by Bossa Tres; 2812 N. Lincoln Ave. 773-388-3500.

PEOPLE LOUNGE

\$5 Jager bombs, DJs Tevo and Johnny spin world music, '80s and classic hip-hop 9 p.m. No cover; 1560 N. Milwaukee Ave. 773-227-9339.

PLAN B

\$6 fish and chips, DJ Alex Rage spins 10 p.m.; 1635 N. Milwaukee Ave. 773-252-2680.

SHADOW BAR

9 p.m.: Vibe Fridays. DJs V Dubb and Sean Mac spin. Cover varies; 811 W. Lake St. 312-491-9600.

SPIN
\$5 Absolut cocktails, \$7 Absolut martinis, VJ Riley York and DJ Chris Eterno 10 p.m. No cover; 800 W. Belmont Ave. 773-327-7711.

SUBTERRANEAN
\$4 Stoli flavored cocktails, \$5 appetizer combo, DJs Trew, MTM and guests spin. \$5; 2011 W. North Ave. 773-278-6600.

TRANSIT
DJs Frankie J, Juan the Predator and Green Eyes spin. \$15; 1431 W. Lake St. 312-491-8600.

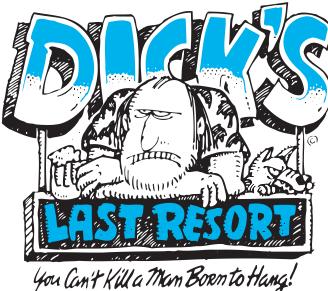
VICTORY LIQUORS
\$3 Kilo Kai cocktails, \$3 Coors and Coors Light bottles, \$5 40-ounce King Cobra bottles, \$5 O bombs, DJs spin '90s hip-hop 10 p.m.; 2610 N. Halsted St. 773-348-5600.

WATERHOUSE
\$5 martinis, DJs spin 10 p.m.; 3407 N. Paulina St. 773-871-1200.

New Year's Broke Bash!

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 31ST, 2008

★ NO COVER BEFORE 8 p.m. (must be 21 or older after 8 p.m.)
 ★ MUSIC MEDLEY CONTEST! Test your musical I.Q.!
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Friday**BATTLE OF THE SAXES FEATURING VON FREEMAN AND ED PETERSEN**

9 p.m. \$10-\$15. The Green Mill, 4802 N. Broadway. 773-878-5552.

DAN TRUDELL QUARTET

9 p.m. \$15. Pops for Champagne, 601 N. State St. 312-266-7677.

THE DIRTY BLUE, THE QUILTS

9 p.m. \$5. Double Door, 1572 N. Milwaukee Ave. 773-489-3160.

DOUGLAS EWART AND INVENTIONS

9:30 p.m. Cover varies. The Velvet Lounge, 67 E. Cermak Rd. 312-791-9050.

ELI JONES, DYLAN POSA

10 p.m. \$8. Hideout, 1354 W. Wabansia Ave. 773-227-4433.

LIQUOR BOXX, DES PLAINES RIVER BAND, C.O. JONES

9 p.m. \$8. FitzGerald's, 6615

Roosevelt Rd., Berwyn. 708-788-2118.

LUCKY BOYS CONFUSION, SIMPLE SIMON, HEART SET SELF-DESTRUCT

8 p.m. \$17.50-\$20. Metro, 3730 N. Clark St. 773-549-0203.

MANNHEIM STEAMROLLER

8 p.m. \$30-\$65. Rosemont Theatre, 5400 N. River Rd., Rosemont. 312-559-1212.

PRESSGANG

8 p.m. \$5-\$8. Bottom Lounge, 1375 W. Lake St. 312-666-6775.

THREE PIECE AND A BISCUIT, WINDOWS WIDE, DOLLBODY KID, CANYON, BOB HARTWELL

8:30 p.m. \$9. Elbo Room, 2871 N. Lincoln Ave. 773-549-5549.

Saturday**THE ASSEMBLY, THE MIDNIGHT SHOWS, INCHWORM**

9:30 p.m. \$8. Subterranean, 2011 W. North Ave. housecallent.com

Metromix's top shows**MY MORNING JACKET**

Rockers play from this year's excellent "Evil Urges." 7:30 p.m. Sat.-Sun. \$39.50. The Chicago Theatre, 175 N. State St. 312-559-1212.

THE WACO BROTHERS

Alt-country locals know how to rock. Simple as that. 10 p.m. Fri-Sat. \$12-\$14. Schubas, 3159 N. Southport Ave. 773-525-2508.

BATTLE OF THE SAXES FEATURING VON FREEMAN AND ED PETERSEN

8 p.m. \$10-\$15. The Green Mill, 4802 N. Broadway. 773-878-5552.

COREY WILKES AND BLACK SLANG

9:30 p.m. \$15. The Morse Theatre, 1328 Morse Ave. 773-654-5100.

I LUV LUV BIRDS, THE CHAIRS, SIX AND

»» page 24

THE WHITE TIE AFFAIR

Kinda like Fall Out Boy, but glossier. With Powerspace. 7 p.m. Sun. \$10-\$12. Beat Kitchen, 2100 W. Belmont Ave. housecallent.com

LIL WAYNE

The only singer who thinks having a frog in his throat is a good thing. With T-Pain, Keyshia Cole, Gym Class Heroes, Ben One. 6 p.m. Sat. \$45.75-\$85.75. United Center, 1901 W. Madison St. 312-559-1212.



Lil Wayne

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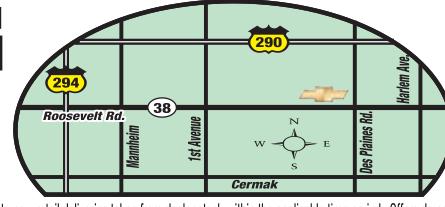


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 - Visit the *Space Visualization Laboratory*
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Oh My God
singer **Billy O'Neill**

»» page 22

A HALF FURLONGS
9 p.m. \$7. Ronny's,
2101 N. California Ave.
mpshows.com

LIVERPOOL LEGENDS
8 p.m. \$20-\$40.
Star Plaza Theatre,
8001 Delaware Pl.,
Merrillville, Ind. 312-
559-1212.

LUCKY BOYS CONFUSION,
MARK ROSE,
LOVE ME ELECTRIC,
CAVASHAWN
6 p.m. \$17.50-\$20.
Metro, 3730 N.
Clark St. 773-549-
0203.

MACABRE,
CIANIDE, ELFVIS,
SPARE CHANGE
10 p.m. \$10-\$12.
Empty Bottle, 1035 N.
Western Ave. 773-276-
3600.

MANNHEIM STEAMROLLER
8 p.m. \$30-\$65.
Rosemont Theatre,
5400 N. River Rd.,
Rosemont. 312-559-
1212.

OH MY GOD,
BRIGHTON, MA
9 p.m. \$6-\$8. Hideout,
1354 W. Wabansia Ave.
773-227-4433.

PAUL GREEN'S SCHOOL OF ROCK ALLSTARS
5:30 p.m. \$12. Martyrs',
3855 N. Lincoln Ave.
773-404-9869.

PEARLS MAHONE AND THE ONE EYED JACKS
8 p.m. \$8-\$10. Bottom
Lounge, 1375
W. Lake St. 312-666-
6775.

RICH CORPOLONGO GROUP
9:30 p.m. Cover
varies. The Velvet
Lounge, 67 E. Cermak
Rd. 312-791-9050.

ROBBIE FULKS, THE LONG GONE LONESOME BOYS
9 p.m. \$15. FitzGerald's,
6615 Roosevelt Rd.,
Berwyn. 312-559-1212.

RUSTED ROOT, BACKYARD TIRE FIRE
9 p.m. \$33-\$34.50.
House of Blues,
329 N. Dearborn St.
312-923-2000.

SILVER GUN,
GROOVESHIRE,
THE MOTHER Z'S,
CHRIS MACCARTHY
8:30 p.m. \$10.
Elbo Room, 2871 N.
Lincoln Ave. 773-549-
5549.

Sunday

ALEX CHILTON BIRTHDAY BASH:
ALLA, CERTAIN STARS, DOLLY VARDEN, THE DRYSALES, EVENING BELLS, THE INJURED PARTIES, JERK ALERT, THE NEW FICTION, JEREMY PORTER, RED WIGGLERS, TENNISCOURTS, WELCOME TO ASHLEY
8 p.m. \$10. Empty Bottle, 1035 N. Western Ave. 773-276-3600.

BRIENN PERRY ORCHESTRA
6 p.m. \$8. FitzGerald's,
6615 Roosevelt Rd.,
Berwyn. 708-788-2118.

DEXTER, ZIKR
8 p.m. \$5-\$8. Reggie's Rock Club, 2109 S. State St. 312-949-0120.

JAZZ JAM WITH ISAIAH SPENCER
9:30 p.m. Cover varies. The Velvet Lounge, 67 E. Cermak Rd. 312-791-9050.

LAUREN FROST
9 p.m. \$5. Double Door, 1572 N. Milwaukee Ave. 773-489-3160.

MUSTARD PLUG, DEALS GONE BAD, DAN POTTHAST, THE DRASTICS, WASTE BASKET, DJ CHUCK WREN
5:30 p.m. \$11-\$13.
Metro, 3730 N. Clark St. 773-549-0203.

OVERMAN, JOIE DE VIVRE, WE THE TREES, WILL JACOBS AND DIRTY DEAL, WEIGHT IN WORDS
8:30 p.m. \$7. Elbo Room, 2871 N. Lincoln Ave. 773-549-5549.

RUSTED ROOT, BACKYARD TIRE FIRE
9 p.m. \$33-\$34.50.
House of Blues, 329 N. Dearborn St. 312-923-2000.



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Stock # EZ7532
Stock # EZ7535
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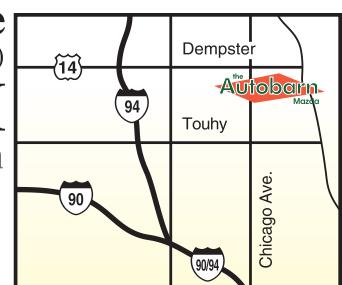
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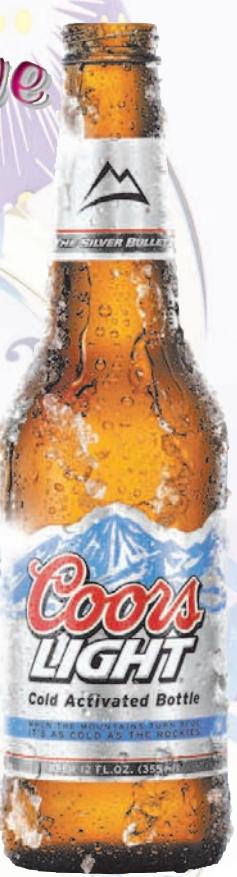
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“

Life is short, and it feels really meaningful to be working on songs again.”

Ig
organist
for Oh My God



Oh My God sees the light

Chicago Tribune

Last September, while returning from a show in Athens, Ohio, Oh My God's tour van was struck head-on by a vehicle that drifted over the center line and directly into its path. The impact killed the other driver, totaled the band's tour van and left its members suffering from multiple injuries that required countless months of rehabilitation.

Now, more than a year removed from the collision, the band's current members—organist Ig, bassist Billy O'Neill, drummer Dathan DeVore and guitarist Anthony Gravino—are recording with an eye on a spring 2009 release. Ig phoned to discuss the accident, the band's recovery and how the incident has affected the group's material.

I bet you're ready for this year to end.

We didn't have a good year. It was a long, cold winter sitting around doing physical therapy.

The crash was pretty bad then?

[After the accident] our drummer [Bish] basically retired, which was too bad because he was an exceptional drummer. His reasons were as much emotional and mental as physical, if not more so. Within our ranks, that

was the real tragedy of the whole thing.

This isn't the band's first major mishap, even if it is the most severe.

We've had three major situations happen to us after the first show of a tour. There was one time where we did the first show and then got all our stuff ripped off in Buffalo. We had another time where we did

one show, and the van got rear-ended and the repairs [cost] \$4,000. This accident, too, was after the first show of a tour. A friend said we should start booking a phantom first gig that doesn't exist just to trick the gods.

Did the accident have any effect on the new material you're working on?

It was a heavy year for a couple of us. I had the accident, and then a couple months later I had a child. Billy has had some domestic problems ... I think the package deal of that has certainly influenced some of Billy's lyrics. He's got some sadness and regrets and big questions about the future. But there's a certain joyousness in what we're doing. We're doing what we love and, if anything, we feel more compelled to play and record. Life is short, and it feels really meaningful to be working on songs again.

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New 2009 Volkswagen **Passat**



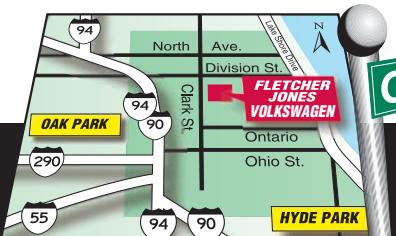
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pop

2008: Year of the turkey

So you had a bad day? These celebs had a bad year. Here's a special shout-out to the pop culture losers of 2008.



Sarah Palin

Folksy quips and obtuse interviews inspired Tina Fey's devastating imitation. And what's up with that turkey slaughter video?



NeNe Leakes

"The Real Housewives of Atlanta" star was embarrassed by allegations she and her hubby are not as well-to-do as the hit Bravo show makes them out to be.



David Duchovny

In a sad case of life imitating art, Duchovny, who plays a sex-crazed writer on "Californication," checked himself into rehab for sex addiction and confirmed a split from longtime wife Tea Leoni.



President Bush

The recent target of a pair of hurled shoes and the salutation, "you dog," Dubya leaves office with some of the lowest presidential ratings. Ever.



Heidi Montag

She's a shameless publicity hound, but our hearts sorta go out to "The Hills" star for her confusing faux marriage to Spencer Pratt, a reality TV villain who makes Omarosa look like Oprah.



British dudes

It was a down year for the now Madonna-less Guy Ritchie, fair-to-middling MTV VMA host Russell Brand and repeat jailbird Blake Fielder-Civil, whose only real claim to fame is ruining wife Amy Winehouse's life.



POP STARS

They're headed to the White House, but the Obamas are more than just a political duo

By Kyra Kyles

REDEYE

Sam and Diane from "Cheers." Rachel and Ross of "Friends." Jim and Pam at "The Office."

Don't forget real-life Hollywood duos the Beckhams, Cruises, Smiths and, oh yes, the union informally known as Bradgelina. It's a fact. Super couples—both real and imagined—inflame pop culture passions. But this year, one uber-hot pair is RedEye's Pop Culture Couple of 2008.

Already being compared to the iconic Kennedys, President-elect Barack and First Lady-to-be Michelle Obama are the dynamic duo worthy of this paper's fifth designation of the person or group that has most shaped pop culture over the past year. The Obamas took over our TV screens, including a highly watched post-election interview with Barbara Walters.

"SNL" also unleashed impressions of them, including former cast member Maya Rudolph, who made a cameo as a musical Michelle sing-

ing "Solid as Barack." In a more controversial move, "SNL's" non-black Fred Armisen appeared as Barack, jacking the former Illinois Senator's staccato speaking style.

The Obamas also exhibited magazine magnetism, ranging from the outrage-sparking New Yorker caricature of them in so-called extremist gear to January's issue of Essence—now on newsstands—featuring a version with Barack and another with Michelle.

Like past Pop Persons RedEye has profiled, the Obamas are absolutely everywhere. Because of their political prowess, their sharp fashion sense and the fact they inspired mounds of merchandise, the Obamas handily beat out formidable contenders, including Tina Fey, Michael Phelps and Lil Wayne.

Fashion forward

Esquire named the president-elect among the top three of its 10 most stylish men, adding him to a list populated by "Batman" hunk Christian Bale and homegrown hip-hopper

Lupe Fiasco.

As for Michelle's impact on the pop culture closet, consider that she sent women scrambling after donning a simple black-and-white sundress from White House/Black Market on "The View" in June.

"Women literally were snatching [that dress] up," Jessica Wells, a spokeswoman for the retailer, told the Wall Street Journal about the dress, which retailed for a more-than-reasonable \$148.

The ripple effect has elevated one of her go-to designers, locally based Maria Pinto, into a new realm of post-election popularity. Pinto's sales have increased by 45 percent in the last year, according to the Journal. Pinto designed several Obama frocks, including an aqua-blue, V-neck dress Michelle rocked during her speech at the Democratic National Convention.

Reviewers weren't so kind about a Narciso Rodriguez red-and-black number she wore on Election Night, with USA Today poll respondents overwhelmingly calling it an "off" moment.

But that hasn't stopped designers from clamoring to dress her. Recently, style icons—including Diane von Furstenberg, Michael

• PEAK PERFORMANCE

These five were megastars in their own right. RedEye charts just how hot they were. **KYRA KYLES**



Kors and Marc Jacobs—engaged in a sketch-off in an issue of Women's Wear Daily for an article titled "Michelle Obama: What Should She Wear?"

RedEye's advice: maybe not Narciso for Inauguration Day.

Obama-dise

If folks aren't *talking about* what the Obamas are wearing, they are *wearing* the Obamas. Their famous faces are selling like hot cakes, local merchants and memorabilia producers told RedEye.

While T-shirts with images of Barack Obama flew off the shelves at the South Side casual wear store New York's Hot Stuff pre-election, these days customers are taken with tees with both Obamas, or the entire First Family, on the front—this according to one of Hot Stuff's managers.

Hyde Park T-shirt designer Dwamina Drew most recently produced a wearable caricature of the Obamas in mid-fist bump, a nod to the couple's celebratory gesture the night Obama accepted the Democratic presidential nomination.

The colorful "Politics as Unusual" tees—available for \$30 at enstru-mental.com—are among the top sellers in Enstrumental history, Drew said.

"Both of them are so inspirational and are really selling as the holidays and the inauguration draws near," Drew, 29, told RedEye of the Obamas.

"Barack Obama is an uplifting figure and Michelle is too, not only for African-American or Latino women, but all women."

Famous friends

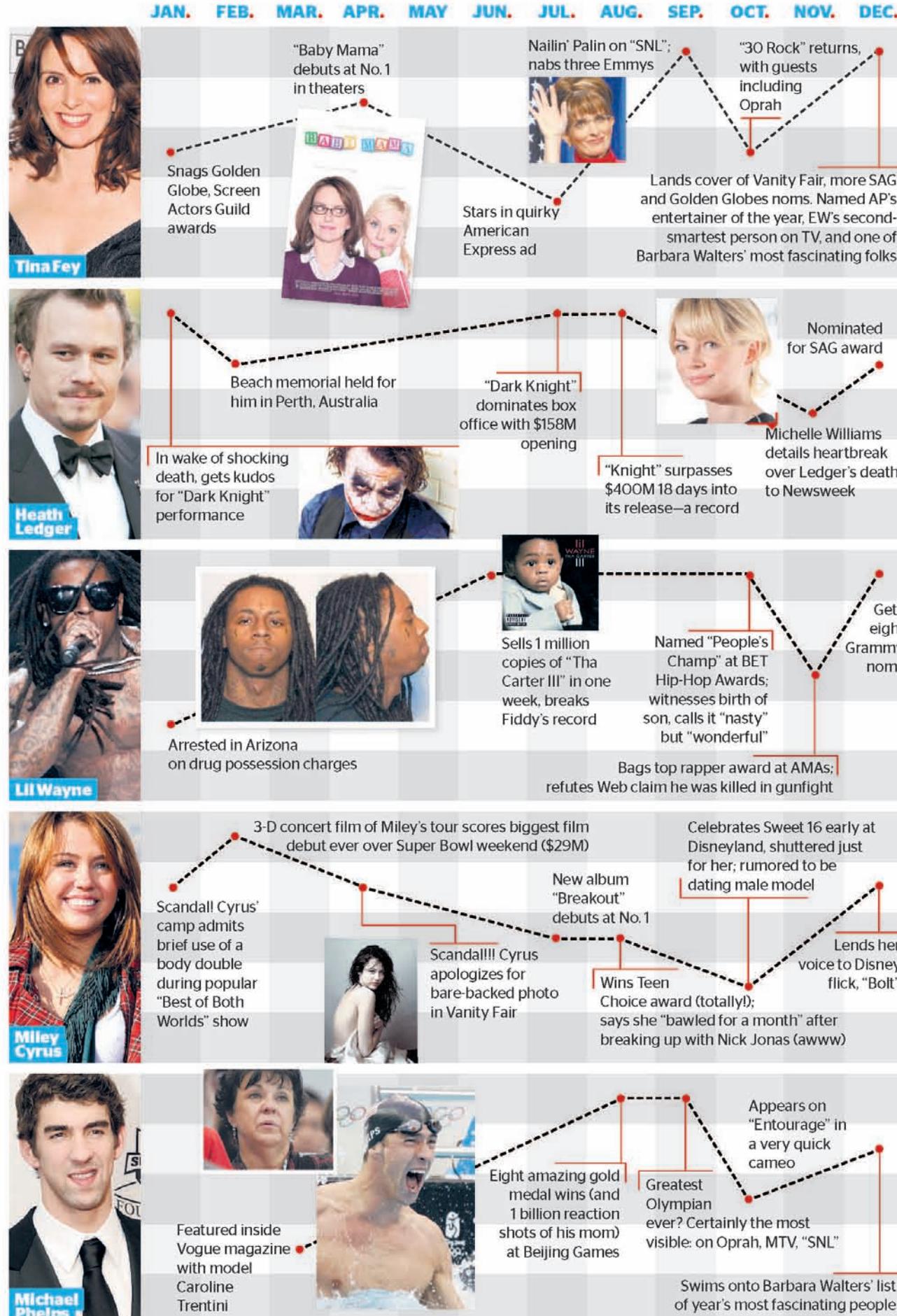
The Obamas are hot in Hollywood, attracting a throng of famous admirers. Local hip-hop artist and actor Common dedicated a song, "Changes," on his recently released album "Universal Mind Control" to the president-elect. He told RedEye he wanted to perform that song for the First Family at the inauguration.

"I've been speaking it into existence, even before Barack became president-elect," Common said. "I said I would play for him if he gets elected, and be at the inaugural ball. Maybe they'll call me now."

Get in line, Common. Even Beyoncé breathlessly campaigned for a spot on the presidential playlist just one day after Obama's historic win.

"If they need me to volunteer, they need me to sing, I'm there, and I'm ready," Beyonce announced to reporters, according to the New York Daily News.

Other celeb attendees are lining up just to attend the historic gala, including Anne Hathaway, Spike Lee and another hot Hollywood coupling, Will Smith and Jada Pinkett-Smith, the Daily News reported.



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Final countdown

Our 10 best—and worst—movies of '08

By Matt Pais

I have to say it: 2008 was not a great year for movies. Not compared to 2007, which had at least a dozen stunners and a handful that were arguably better than anything in '08. But enough with the Debbie Downer routine. This year's best all made the list for a reason. So here goes: 10 very good—and sometimes great—films to see immediately. **MATT PAIS IS THE METROMIX MOVIE CRITIC.**

THE BEST

1 Happy-Go-Lucky

No need for a "plot." This is a glorious work of art, and the sort of movie that not only changes your outlook on teaching, learning and living—but on movies as well.

2 Wendy and Lucy

An America without opportunity, a life spent drifting, a girl (Michelle Williams) who'd give anything to find her dog and a safe place to sleep. Slow, unforgettable stuff.

3 Funny Games

Makes you consider why you want to see people die on screen, and if there's even a line that distances us from the characters in peril. So tense, it hurts.

4 The Dark Knight

How could a superhero movie ever look better or have a stronger connection to the moral struggles of real life? Wouldn't mind seeing Christian Bale's Batman channel another Sesame Street character besides Cookie Monster. Maybe Snuffalopogus?

5 Bigger, Stronger, Faster*

Our country's culture of winning has rarely been so thoroughly, entertainingly examined than in Chris Bell's revealing doc. Hilarious and very well-reported, it's proof that while competition is always the same, what it means to be a winner has changed.

6 WALL-E

The year's best romance exists between a trash collector and a laser-shooting robot who looks like a garbage can. Gorgeous.

7 Paranoid Park

Gus Van Sant again beautifully captures the mood of teenagers, freezing life when moments seem to last forever. A stirring portrait of a teen in crisis, with the understanding of how it feels to have your brain overflowing and nowhere to let it out.

8 The Wrestler

A washed-up wrestler struggles to find something worth living for, whether it's a stripper, his estranged daughter or the sport in which he's barely healthy enough to compete anymore.



With Oscar-worthy work from Mickey Rourke and Marisa Tomei, the film is full of small details and big truths about choices, mistakes and resilience. The setup is cliche. The execution is anything but.

9 Ballast

A work of fiction that looks and feels like a documentary, "Ballast" doesn't do anything quickly or loudly. Writer-director Lance Hammer's debut crushes you with a lost life in the Mississippi Delta, and the leaps of faith that keep people together, moving forward.

10 Role Models

Simply the biggest laughs this year, wrapped in a terrific studio comedy that likes its characters and respects its audience. Paul Rudd needs to write and star in more movies. Please.

THE WORST

Stay far away from these movies (with No. 1 being the worst).



1 Disaster Movie

Somehow Jason Friedberg and Aaron Seltzer hit new depths without drilling themselves into the center of the Earth.

2 The Hottie and the Nottie

Paris Hilton stars as a hot, dumb blond. 'Nuff said.

3 Death Race

Kill kill kill! Sheesh.

4 Saw V

Pointless and senseless don't begin to describe this pathetic sequel. Seriously. Make it stop.

5 Seven Pounds

An astonishingly manipulative movie that seems a little bit ashamed about its own premise. With good reason.

6 88 Minutes

This is the more stupid of Al Pacino's two idiotic movies this year. ("Righteous Kill" earns an honorable mention.)

7 First Sunday

The comedy: Fat people should be mocked and white people are square. The lesson: Churches are the best places to rob. The punchline: the appearance of VH1 staple Tiffany "New York" Pollard.

8 Postal

The year's biggest, most jaw-dropping mess.

9 In the Name of the King: Dungeon Siege

Wouldn't be a huge deal if it were at least accidentally funny, but not even Burt Reynolds can pull this out of Dullsville.

10 College Road Trip

Why make a movie about college geared at 6-year-olds?

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Most animal reaction shots: "Nim's Island"

Worst performance by an Oscar winner:

Forest Whitaker in "Street Kings"

Best title: "Zombie Strippers"

Most daring nudity: Jason Segel in "Forgetting Sarah Marshall"

Best death scene: pencil trick in "The Dark Knight"

Worst singing voice: Pierce Brosnan in "Mamma Mia!"

Sleepiest star: Nicolas Cage in "Bangkok Dangerous"

Worst cameo decision: Fall Out Boy in the abysmal "Sex Drive"

Tell us something we don't know: "W."

Most pleasant surprise: "High School Musical 3"

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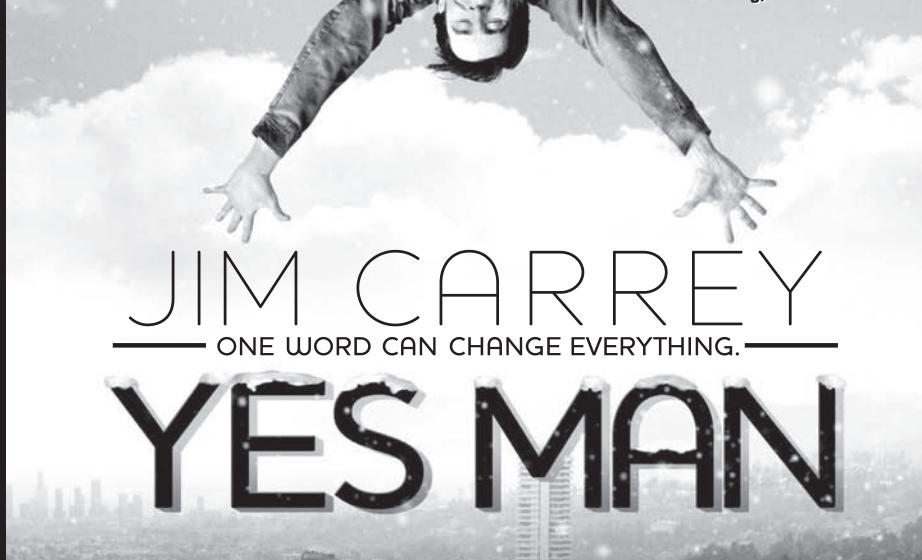
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Dog days for Wilson

The Philadelphia Inquirer

Owen Wilson, a golden retriever among actors, admits that he based his slacker dude in "You, Me and Dupree" on Blue, the chocolate Labrador of his boyhood.

"Dupree had the personality of a dog. You love him in spite of himself," said the actor, who has gone from playing like a Lab to playing opposite one in "Marley & Me," which opened Christmas Day.

Wilson stars—with Jennifer Aniston—as journalist John Grogan, author of the bittersweet best seller chronicling what he learned from his mischievous pooch. The Oscar-nominated screenwriter and actor brings to the role more than a few life lessons learned from Garcia, his Australian cattle dog.

"The main thing my dog taught me to value is to be in the moment," said Wilson, 40, traces of Texas twang lingering in his voice.

"Owen speaks slowly, but his mind is quick," says "Marley" director David Frankel, who ranks Wilson as "a great improviser," up there with Meryl Streep.

"And when you're working with dogs, you have to throw away the script," says Frankel, praising Wilson's rapport with his canine co-stars, which included being on the receiving end of a tongue bath.

This is the writer and actor whose character Dignan in "Bottle Rocket" warned, "Be sensitive to the fact that other people are not comfortable talking about emotional disturbances. Um, I'm fine with that, but—other people."

Since pulling himself out of the despair that led to an alleged suicide attempt in 2007, Wilson's family sustainers are his parents and brothers Andrew and Luke, both actors. His No. 1 friend is filmmaker Wes Anderson, with whom he co-wrote the scripts to "Bottle Rocket," "Rushmore" and "The Royal Tenenbaums," the last earning them an Oscar bid.

Movies? Wilson, like Kevin Smith and Quentin



Tarantino, is of the "Clerks" generation, filmmakers who learned film history while working the rental counter at a video emporium (in Wilson's case, a Dallas Blockbuster).

"For me, acting and writing are alike in some ways. I always try to find a different way of saying something. It's nice to try different things, to feel that energy of saying something fresh," he said.

As Anderson once noted, "Owen is not concerned with how to play a scene, but with how he can improve it."

This may endear the actor to his directors, but it has been known to irritate co-stars, including brother Luke, who on "Bottle Rocket" snapped, "Why don't you just say the lines the way you wrote them?"

He got a taste of his own medicine on "Marley," where it took 22 Labs to play the dog. Wilson couldn't say the lines as written because the canine co-stars proved as unpredictable as Luke found him.

"Owen played off the dog," said animal trainer Mathilde DeCagny, wrangler of Clyde, who was cast as "Bad Marley," the one who eats couches and swallows necklaces.

But Wilson says that W.C. Fields was only partially correct when he said actors should never work with animals or children, those diabolical upstagers.

"Uh, I think he might have been right about children. Because when a baby's done with a scene, he's done," Wilson said. "Dogs are better trained—they'll give you that extra take."

Training day

The title of John Grogan's memoir is a warning: "Marley & Me: Life and Love with the World's Worst Dog."

But to Larry Madrid, animal trainer for the movies, including the film of Grogan's book, the gauntlet had been thrown down.

"World's worst dog? I can train that."

It took 22 Labs of various sizes and temperaments to film "Marley & Me," which was shot in Miami and other parts of southern Florida last winter. Madrid, who handled hawks for "3:10 to Yuma," crows for "Charlotte's Web" and everything but roaches in "Enchanted," had it pretty easy for this shoot.

"Personality-wise, yellow Labs are pretty outgoing and full of it," he said. But it takes multiple dogs to give a single animal a multi-faceted, multi-tricks "performance" for a movie.

Madrid has words of advice for anyone interested in adopting a Lab.

"Make sure you have enough space or time for a Lab," Madrid said. "If you don't have the space for a Lab, do you have the time to take them someplace where they can run and jump in the water?"

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Party primping

By Dorothy Hernandez

The lead-up to New Year's Eve has begun, with festive fetes, swanky soirees or dinner dates happening nearly every night for some. Here are some of the latest products that can help you get your party face on. **REDEYE**



Christmas Party gift set

\$49.95 at Lush stores and lush.com

It says "Christmas," but this pack is good for any time. It's the perfect primping set for the eco-conscious girl getting glammed up and for when she's thrown back one too many. Not only does it aim to shake the regret of last night out of you but quite a few of the products have booze in them. Perfect for getting in the celebration frame of mind.

Pre-party: Check out the

« Ocean Salt Face and Body Scrub (\$18.55 for a 4.2-ounce jar).

Its mixture of sea salt, fruit and vodka (!) will make

your skin all shiny and new. Lather up with the

Happy Hippy Shower Gel (\$9.25 for a 3.3-ounce bottle),

an energizing all-purpose body and hair wash (best skip the hair if you've got dry locks).



Post-party:

« The Too Drunk Emotibomb (\$3.95),

which looks like an inebriated Pac-Man ghost after it's been eaten up,

packs a powerful citrus scent that will get rid of that nasty hangover more effectively than a bloody mary the morning after.



Michael Kors Very Pretty

\$75 for a 1.7-ounce eau de parfum spray at Sephora »

Kors claims the fragrance calls to mind "camera candy" of Hollywood starlets, and for the most part it lives up to its name. It's subtle and feminine with a light, crisp, fruity scent. This is the perfect fragrance for an elegant holiday cocktail party or a romantic dinner date. With a few spritzes, you'll be feeling like Britney Spears, who sings on her latest album, "Mr. Photographer, I think I'm ready for my closeup."



Pixi Lumi Lux Eye Palette

\$38 at Target

This eye palette comes in an eye-popping gold case and a dizzying array of colors. It won't fit into tiny purses and clutches for a night out, but that doesn't matter. The best thing about this kit is that it lives up to its long-lasting promise. After 12-hours plus, the eye shadow I applied at 1 p.m. was still going strong. It's great for everyday looks, but some of the bolder colors pale in comparison. And don't bother using it as eye liner, the foundation of any party look: the shadow is too flimsy to line lids.



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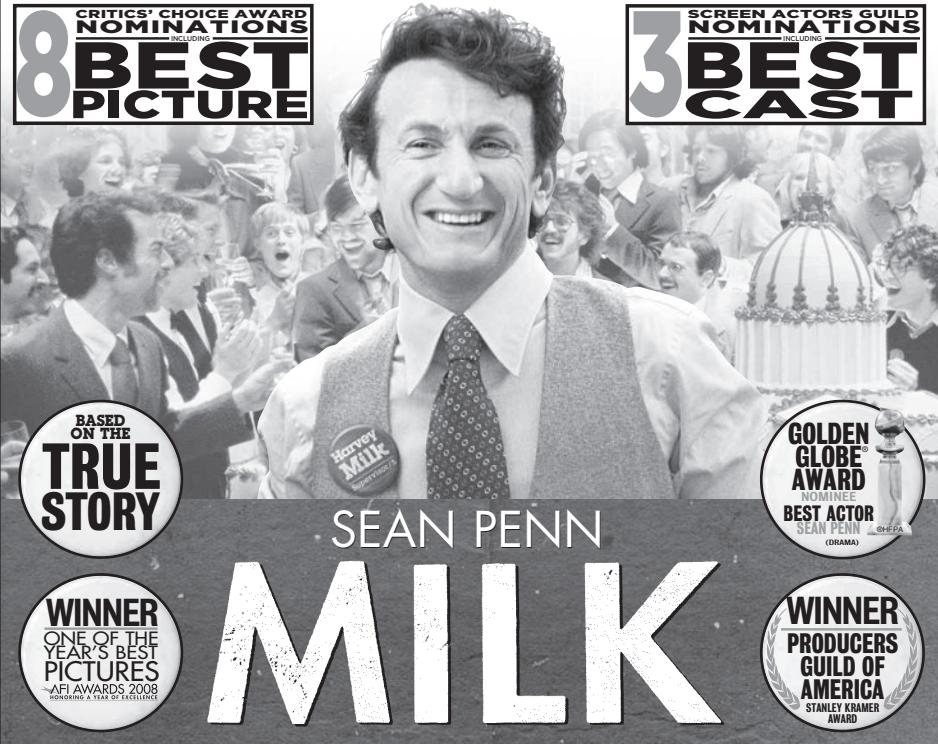
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1625 - 1629 West North Shore
www.NewInRogersPark.com

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623 Brummel Street, Unit G
Evanston IL, 60202

Evanston's newest condo conversion. 2 bedroom 1 bathroom have stunning deluxe kitchens, Stainless Steel Appliances, maple cabinets, granite countertops, plentiful parking, all for **\$770* a month!** *with 20% down, does not include property taxes or monthly association, buyers must qualify.



Ivana Majic
847-316-8500

Western Ave.

Luxury Condominiums and Duplexes

22 S Western Ave, Unit 2 D, Chicago IL 60612

Stunning New Construction. All Brick and Limestone. 2 Bedroom / 2 Bath units have elegant finishes featuring cherry and maple cabinets with granite counter tops, Stainless Steel Appliances, oak hardwood floors, custom fireplaces, marble baths with Jacuzzi tubs, private balconies and indoor parking! All for **\$937* a month!** *with 20% down, does not include property taxes or monthly association, buyers must qualify.



Tony Creagh
708-256-1136

Paulina Ave.

Luxury Condominiums and Duplexes

4507 N Paulina Ave, Chicago, IL 60640

Beautifully restored all brick corner building with stunning architecture, cherry hardwood floors, stainless steel appliances, custom mill work, extra tall bay windows, imported faucets, soaker jetted tubs, All this and more for **\$1,131* a month!** *with 20% down, does not include property taxes or monthly association, buyers must qualify.



Scott Graden
312-420-6211

Reba Place

Luxury Condominiums

900 Reba Place, Unit 3, Evanston IL 60202

Great location and tremendous value. Hardwood floors through-out, recessed lighting, maple cabinets, stainless steel appliances, granite counters, 9 foot ceilings, and soaker tubs. All this for **\$1,216* a month!** *with 20% down, does not include property taxes or monthly association, buyers must qualify.



Ivana Majic
847-316-8500

Rogers

Gorgeous Glenview Home!

1785 Rogers, Lot A, Glenview IL 60025

Stunning new five bedroom, six bath home on lovely lot! Travertine, Brazilian cherry floors. Open floor plan; huge granite kitchen open to grand family room. Three fireplaces, first level fifth bed/office, lovely master suite, all bedrooms en-suite, mud room. Basement with rec room, office/sixth bed, sauna! all this for **\$4,253* a month!** *with 30% down, does not include property taxes, buyers must qualify.



Martha May
847-533-0559

Windsor

Gorgeous Glenview Home!

710 Windsor, Glenview, IL 60025

Gorgeous new five bedroom, five and one half bath Colonial in prestigious East Glenview. Travertine, Brazilian cherry floors. First level office or fifth bedroom. Granite kitchen with island. Five fireplaces, wet bars, steam shower, central vacuum. Huge basement has rec room, sauna, bath, sixth bedroom. Three-car garage. All this for **\$7,090 a month!*** with 30% down, does not include property taxes, buyers must qualify.



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Dina Davis
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Stop using sex as a weapon

A relationship desperately needs certain mechanical aspects in order to survive, including love, respect, time, trust and everyone's favorite topic—sex.

If your relationship is devoid of any of these components, maybe you should re-evaluate its worth. But let's be clear—if you're relationship has the other components

except for sex, all you have is a really good friend. Good friends are great, but most men won't put up with the rest of your high-maintenance behavior if you're not putting out.

I have a friend I call The Warden. She is one of many women who believe sex should be doled out as part of a reward system.

The Warden puts her boyfriends on sexual lockdown when they anger her. She believes—wrongly—that withholding the goodies is going to force her men to behave better.

For example, if a boyfriend shows up late and doesn't call, she'll make him sleep alone for a week. At the same time, she tries to reward good behavior by giving him an extra special workout.

Essentially, The Warden makes herself a human doggy biscuit.

Has withholding sex ever turned her boyfriends into more thoughtful people? No. Do they develop better time management skills? No!

Her actions backfire, create a greater divide between her and her men, and eventually cause them to go sniffing around for more willing participants.

And girls, let's be realistic. A moratorium on nookie is not fair for us either. We enjoy sex just as much as men. Does it REALLY make sense to deprive ourselves of a good time because he's in the dog house? I think not.

In relationships, arguments are natural; a lack of sex is not. Good sex can be like hitting a reset button after a stupid spat.

But if you're really turned off, maybe it's a symptom of a deeper problem. A disappearance of urge might mean that other components are missing. Maybe you've lost respect for him, or no longer trust or love him. Think about it. SEX COLUMNIST GINA B. IS A

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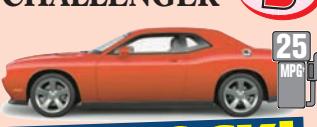


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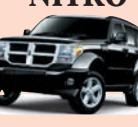
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Full court press

'08 was big year for celeb justice

Associated Press

Stargazing at L.A. courthouses is common, but most of the A-list celebrity justice action took place away from Hollywood in 2008.

Jurors in Florida, Chicago and Las Vegas decided the fates of top celebs in criminal cases, while New York played host to the year's messiest divorce. L.A. wasn't completely left out, thanks in large part to Britney Spears.

Here's a recap of stars who kept attorneys flush in billable hours:

Wesley Snipes

"Passenger 57" got a new identifier in '08 —a federal prisoner ID number. A federal jury acquitted Wesley Snipes of tax fraud and conspiracy charges in February, but found him guilty of three counts of failing to file income tax returns. Snipes stopped paying taxes in 1999, and was convicted of failing to file returns for that year and 2000 and 2001.



R. Kelly

The man who belted out to audiences that he believed he could fly finally showed he would walk—on criminal charges. Jurors in Chicago acquitted R. Kelly of charges he videotaped himself having sex with a girl as young as 13.



O.J. Simpson

Thirteen years after his acquittal for his wife's murder, O.J. Simpson received judgment from Las Vegas jurors. Guilty. The conviction came after authorities charged Simpson with spearheading the robbery of a sports memorabilia dealer in a Sin City hotel room.



Britney Spears

Not all comebacks involve courtrooms and a cadre of lawyers, but Britney Spears' sure did. The singer started out the year in meltdown but seemed better within months of a court awarding her father control of her personal and financial affairs. Along the way, Spears landed in just about every court possible: criminal, probate, family law, federal, appeals. All that to establish a conservatorship, settle a custody dispute with ex-husband Kevin Federline and avoid a conviction on a misdemeanor driver's license charge.

Christie Brinkley vs. Peter Cook

Former model Christie Brinkley's 10-year marriage to fourth husband Peter Cook (above) may have ostensibly ended in 2006, but the couple's weeklong divorce trial burned hotter than a heat wave. A week's worth of testimony provided embarrassing details of Cook's affair with an 18-year-old woman, his porn predilections and a psychiatrist's assessment that he was "narcissistic."

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DJ AM files suit

DJ AM has followed his co-passengers' suit by filing his own suit stemming from the fatal plane crash in September that seriously injured him and Travis Barker. The celebrity DJ alleges that the two pilots negligently aborted the takeoff Sept. 19 in South Carolina, causing the plane to overrun the runway and crash. The lawsuit, filed Tuesday, also alleges the plane was "defective ... and unreasonably dangerous." DJ AM claims pain and suffering, mental anguish, disfigurement and loss of earnings. Among the defendants are the charter company, Learjet, Goodyear tire and the estates of the pilots.

Do-gooders

President-elect Obama has racked up another accolade this year. According to a ranking of beloved celebrity do-gooders by dosomething.org, the incoming president was named No. 1. His political BFF Oprah Winfrey came in second. Other stars on the list that ranks how stars inspire people 25 and younger included Bradgelina, Ellen DeGeneres, Al Gore and Bono.

Getting 'Ugly'

The parade of guest stars on "Ugly Betty" continues. Lauren Velez from "Dexter" will be starring in a multi-episode arc, according to The Hollywood Reporter. It's reported she'll play Elena, a nurse who crosses paths with the Suarez family. Details about her character are being kept under wraps, but word is that she is tied to a plot twist that might involve the death of a major character.

Pulse monitor

Celeb news, charted for your pleasure

SCANDALOUS**COURTNEY LOVE**

takes to her blog and accuses Kim Kardashian's brother of breaking the rocker's gay employee's nose in September. Kardashian blogs back, saying she's forwarding the "false" claims to her attorneys and adds "Merry Christmas!"

KENDRA WILKINSON

sets the date for her wedding—June 27, 2009, at the Playboy Mansion—and is having second thoughts about Hef giving her away. Ya think?

KATE WALSH

Two weeks after her husband filed for divorce, the "Private Practice" star counterfiles. The soon-to-be-exes differ on the date of the split.

'THE DARK KNIGHT'

Warner Bros. won't release the film in China. Most have probably seen a bootleg by now anyway.

KELLY CLARKSON

is about to launch a new single in January, followed by a new album in March. Will anyone care?

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Celebrity twin

Do you look like a celebrity? Show us! Send your picture along with the name of the celeb who shares your style to dihernandez@tribune.com. For Friday, we have David Figueroa. Think he's a ringer for Hugh Jackman? Text "david" and the number of your opinion to 47383. You'll get the poll results instantly. **1. Dead on** **2. Way off**



Figueroa

Jackman

If this is who you are planning on spending the holidays with, you definitely need to call the experts.



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Gallagher
GETTY IMAGES

NOEL, NOEL

Noel Gallagher needs a hug. The Oasis lead guitarist dumped his holiday wishes on **rollingstone.com** recently: "I'd like an iPhone, a laptop, a new haircut and a Christmas card that didn't say [bleeping] 'Noel' on the front. That would be [bleeping] nice. Just one year. I always get this [bleep], right. And people go, 'Did you get my card?' And you go, 'I dunno, which one was that?' 'Oh, you must've seen it. It had Noel written on the front.' 'Really, and how many of those do you think I get?' That's right. All of them. ... 'Oh, there's a card with my name on it, brilliant. That's from my parents. I'll thank them again for that.' [Bleepin'] pair of idiots."

On second thought, maybe he just needs a different Christmas card.

Whatever they like

With all the year-end, "best of" lists from critics, it's refreshing when the talking heads shut up and ask artists what they think. And that's what **rollingstone.com** did. Here are the tracks that your favorite artists still are crushing on from 2008.



Chris Martin (Coldplay)
"Human," The Killers



Taylor Swift
"If I Were a Boy," Beyoncé



Joe Jonas
"Heartbreak," Kanye West

THE VELVET ROPE

Family guy

You have to tip your cap to Lance Armstrong: The man can ride a bike, and he can build a family.



Armstrong

The seven-time Tour de France winner and testicular cancer survivor and his girlfriend, Anna Hansen, are expecting a baby in June, The Associated Press reports. According to a spokeswoman for Armstrong's cancer foundation, the baby was conceived naturally.

Armstrong had three children with his ex-wife Kristin using in vitro fertilization with sperm he had banked before undergoing chemotherapy, AP says. He announced a return to professional bike racing earlier in the year. What a stud.

LiLo's awkward Christmas

Lindsay Lohan says she recently learned she has a half sister—at least that's what a MySpace post allegedly written by the actress Wednesday says.

Her father, Michael Lohan, has refuted the claim to People magazine.

"My father just let my family and I know ... that he had another child after my little sister Aliana," reads the post. "He cheated on my mother and that really sucks... MERRY CHRISTMAS!!!"

Michael Lohan admitted earlier this year he had a fling with teen Ashley Kaufman's mother, Kristi, in 1995, the L.A. Times reports. But, according to People, he denied what was written in the MySpace post, and said that there's a there's a "99 percent chance" that LiLo's gal pal, Samantha Ronson, wrote the entry.

Holiday helpers

Young Jeezy played Santa's helper this week.

On Wednesday, the rapper delivered gifts to about 50 residences in an Atlanta housing project, the AP reports.

"I'm just trying to be the person who they can count on when things get tough," he said. "I don't want them to look at this holiday as a bad thing like I did [when I was younger]."

Also on Wednesday, maybeweds Heidi Montag and Spencer Pratt of "The Hills" stopped by the Los Angeles Mission, where they were joined by Alyssa Milano, Melissa Joan Hart and "High School Musical's" Corbin Bleu. The stars dished up ham, potatoes, veggies and rolls to the hungry, Us Weekly magazine reported.

THE DIGIT

16

The number of new reality shows set to hit MTV in the coming months, according to **rollingstone.com**. Number of actual music shows left on the "music" channel? One.